

Quality Over Quantity and Hedges

Lieutenant General Frederic J. Brown, U.S. Army, Retired

Currently, the United States fields an army of unprecedented quality; however, the time might come when the nation will need a force predicated on quantity, as it did during World War II. Brown argues that during mobilization when the Army transitions from a quality force to a quantity force, the nation must rely on hedges—highly credible military alternatives to either quality or quantity—that compensate for acknowledged but accepted shortfalls in military capability.

A PERENNIAL defense question is “how much is enough?” What percentage of precious national resources should the U.S. Government devote to defense? This is a particularly vexing question when an exceptionally broad array of defense-policy choices are available and when there are many compelling national competitors for resources.

The quandary increases as attractive emerging capabilities offer hope in upgrading aging U.S. land, sea, and air power. Adding to the dilemma is that the new options claim to be the font of genuine Transformation. So, how much of which—and when—will ensure the desirable future? Which are “must” acquisitions, and which can be deferred until a more certain need emerges? And, what should we buy?

Equally important, in which defense areas do we defer capabilities? What should we *not* buy? Where should we accept shortfalls, confident that we can develop the requisite national-defense capability—the necessary hedge—required to win (to get well) faster than can our competitors?¹

Defense shortfalls are dangerous. Neglecting defense preparation can quickly become a slippery slope leading to military impotence. We simply cannot permit shortfalls to endanger present capabilities.

Immediately available military capabilities deter those tempted to damage important U.S. interests. Deciding where to make cuts so as not to impair important existing capabilities (and if the cuts turn out to be in the wrong areas, taking measures to correct the situation) are important issues of national-defense policy.

America’s Army is a unique product composed of soldiers honed from a democracy that reflects the values of the nation, the states, the Federal republic, and the continent.² What does this mean for U.S. land power when balancing the weight of “how much is enough?” Should the time that elapses until a peer competitor arises be a time of land-power quality or of quantity?

By land-power quantity, I mean land power sufficient to win rapidly against any combination of opponents rapidly with available forces (forces-

in-being) when the National Command Authority (NCA) directs. On the other hand, land-power quality includes having fewer forces but greater capabilities that are on the absolute front edge of contemporary technologies.

If the answer is a smaller, qualitatively superior force, then how do we correct known deficiencies to restore military supremacy if that answer proves wrong? What are the necessary hedges?

Quality and quantity are highly subjective terms often subject to misinterpretation and distortion. One person's quality becomes another's gold plating. To a critic, a focus on quantity could be interpreted as the military's reliance on ill-prepared, ineffective forces used as cannon fodder.

The World War II Army best represents national focus on quantity. Protected by sea power, we built an enormous military capability with which to defeat the Axis Powers. Drafted soldiers were representative of all strata of U.S. society.

As manifested in equipment, such as tanks and aircraft, quantity generated its own quality in tactical excellence. Today, quantity can include active standing forces across all battlefield operating systems (BOS) that are immediately available to fight and win simultaneously in multiple theaters and can maintain that capability irrespective of threat buildups.

On the other hand, quality can be considered as being the following:

- The "best," not just the "satisfactory" of important components of military capability.
- "World class," when comparing military capabilities internationally.
- The exceptional performance of tasks or missions, which means consistently performing in the top 30 percent of a distribution of task and mission performance of individual, team, and collective tasks in typical Army missions executed across a broad spectrum of conflict and drawing on state-of-the-art technologies, and also performing in the top 30 percent of the distribution (half performed in the top 10 percent) of all individual, team, and collective tasks.³

Today, U.S. land power has become accustomed to quality, and quality has been the hallmark of most Army activities for the past several decades. Quality has been manifested in a variety of actions, such as in the following:

Recruiting quality soldiers, who continue to maintain quality practices that are essential to their retention, while generating significant resource advantages; for example, significantly

reducing support-force requirements such as the institutional-training base.

Building an expanded quality force during the Cold War to produce an agile David against the Warsaw Pact Goliath.

Refining warfighting doctrine, equipment, and

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organization as reflected in Operations Just Cause, Desert Storm, and in extended peacekeeping and peace-enforcement activities; and the continued experimentation involved in assimilating the advantages of the digital revolution, as during Louisiana Maneuvers, Force XXI, Strike Force, and most currently, Objective Force Transformation.

Implementing change by focusing on six imperatives: doctrine, training, leaders, organizations, materiel, and soldiers (DTLOMS).

Another example of quality in which the Army plays a larger role is Special Operations Command (SOCOM), which was created to combine joint conventional capabilities with highly responsive, joint unconventional and counterterrorism capabilities. Clearly SOCOM is a model of successful quality-force generation drawing effectively on capabilities across national institutions and is an important precedent in joint-force development.

In fact, quality has been the well-lauded keynote of America's Army since its post-Vietnam rebuilding, arguably paced by quality accessions. TRADOC and SOCOM are particularly important quality precedents for Transformation—one in executing service responsibilities, the other in joint warfighting.

Quantity v. Quality?

The rational national leader wants both quantity and quality—affordably. But with constrained resources, conscious choices are necessary. Alternatives are "fewer but clearly better" or "more but less capable," assuming roughly comparable resource cost for each alternative.

Resource requirements are seldom equal. The policy and program challenge is to avoid "fewer

Losing in war is not an acceptable alternative. Quality can be traded off for quantity only above a minimum defensive capability to preserve national values and resources. This minimum would include such capabilities as nuclear deterrence.

Achieving a realistic capability is complex and

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involves striving for “more and better,” while avoiding “less and worse,” than any capability a likely opponent or coalition of opponents can achieve. The search is for a “sweet spot” of quality sufficient to accomplish assigned missions while maintaining agility and flexibility with which to respond to surprise.

“Fewer but excellent” continues to be preferable to “more but average” for the America’s Army. Neither quality nor quantity is attained with any specific size or capability. Nor does the distinction necessarily relate to any specific threat. Rather, it is an issue of capabilities—a “present” orientation for quantity, a “future” orientation for quality.

Past accomplishments that focus on quality predict future success in pursuing quality in the current international environment, particularly given the substantial broadening of the potential spectrum of conflict. That spectrum includes weapons of mass destruction (WMD) and Homeland Defense against asymmetrical threats such as cyberwar and terrorism as well as conventional threats. Quality can better respond to change—expected or unexpected.

Hedges

Perhaps more important than either quality or quantity, however, is practical policy and program recognition of the requirement to develop hedges. Hedges are highly credible military capability alternatives to either quality or quantity. They compensate for either quality-based or quantity-based

programs should future projections prove wrong. A hedge is the quick fix to a recognized and accepted shortfall in defense capability.

The focus of national defense policies and programs needs to be on quality. But, simultaneously, much more attention needs to be paid to creating and maintaining hedges. In sum, shortfalls are implicit in any quality defense strategy. Policies and programs to fix shortfalls are as important to the nation’s defense as are the clear, evident strengths of quality focus. Therefore, the Army should base hedges on its strengths. Effective hedges should include the following:

- Be potentially decisive if implemented and clearly make a difference at strategic, operational, or tactical levels.
- Be assimilated by the military; the air assault division was clearly a quality success although it required adaptation during the Vietnam war similar to development of U.S. Marine Corps (USMC) amphibious capability and U.S. Navy (USN) carrier aviation before and during World War II. To be a genuine hedge, military capability must be perceived as having been assimilated into doctrine and the force structure so that it will be employed properly when fielded.
- Be credible to a potential enemy.

Policymaker George Kennan once described the United States as a dragon that suddenly awakes and destroys all in its path. Suffering surprise attack, such as at Pearl Harbor or the attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon, is unacceptable as a trigger to stimulate building a quantity military capability. Less extreme alarms must be taken seriously. Past U.S. military responses also serve as hedges, such as being the sole user of nuclear weapons against an enemy during war and as evidenced by actions in Korea and Iraq. There is a strain of national unpredictability that should support the credibility of hedge policies.

Nevertheless, the lesson seems clear. Hedge strategies rely on national acceptance of triggers that mandate a hedge’s execution. Some might see hedges as an artful return to the disastrous 10-year policies of the British during the Interwar Period.⁴ The comparison is unpersuasive. Defense issues are consistent presidential campaign issues.

Prolonged debate continues concerning a vital national security issue—national missile defense. While there is international unease about a potential Fortress America, the clarity of consistent national support for a highly credible national missile shield is remarkable and crosses Demo-



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cratic and Republican administrations. The issues center on “how,” not “if.” Credible defense is a continual subject of national debate.

The importance of collective security can be seen in the Balkans, where U.S. and NATO policies have prevailed, but only after an admittedly unconscionably slow start. That NATO forces will eventually be present in most of former Yugoslavia for the foreseeable future seems likely, but that, also, is a public reminder that freedom is not free.

U.S. Armed Forces are continually in the public view and in harm’s way across the globe. A dysfunctional, zero-casualties mandate, caused by uncertain national support for minor contingencies, is a genuine problem that influences commitment.

There is broad public recognition of a growing Chinese threat, perhaps partially racially based but nonetheless effective as a generator of continuing public concern about defense readiness.

Nuclear espionage and intelligence and electronic warfare collector interceptions also stimulate public perceptions of danger.

Of more significance is the fact that the U.S. defense budget remains enormous. In 1999, U.S. defense expenditures were greater than those in NATO Europe, Russia, China, Iraq, and North Korea combined.⁵ This does not mean that resources are distributed as effectively or as efficiently as they might be, but that the continuing defense focus is exceptional.

The United States might not be best at allocating defense resources, but it is not sleeping. Hedges with appropriate triggers are not only desirable and feasible as Transformation evolves, but they are essential for covering the inevitable shortfalls in a quality force.

The design of hedges will be strongly influenced by the nature of the baseline quality force itself, which is quite likely to draw on the considerable strengths of U.S. land power. Each of

the three components of America's Army shares in providing the quality force and derivative hedges:

- The Active Component, supported by Reserve Components (RC), dominates operations conducted outside the Continental United States (OCONUS) and maintains the reservoir of long lead-time expansion capabilities (actual and latent) that constitute nationally agreed-on credible land-power hedges.

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- The ARNG is the “guts” of quantity-based land power and, supported by AC and USAR, conducts Homeland Defense.

- The USAR conducts (individually or as units) highly specialized, “exotic” national capabilities such as cyberdefense, biological defense, and community management and civil affairs that cannot be sustained by AC nor ARNG.

These general characteristics of a quality-based America's Army generate specific, abiding requirements for each of the six DTLOMS imperatives. The requirements reinforce the need to maintain a quality standing force. Equally important, they become the practical policy and program foundation for developing and sustaining requisite credible hedges.

To support likely hedges, a quality force needs to consider the following six imperatives:

1. Doctrine. Doctrine and tactics, techniques, and procedures (TTP) should be appropriate to the preponderance of highly qualified, motivated leaders. The Army needs to design highly flexible, eclectic tactical doctrine with which to dominate opponents across the broadening spectrum of conflict. Doctrine must accommodate joint and combined forces at all levels of conflict.

2. Training/learning. Training evolving into learning (training and education) should encompass individual, team, and collective learning to standard in an institutional, self-developmental, or unit setting. A practical leader-development

instrument, training at CTC should be increased, and leader-training units need to be developed to provide quasi-combat experiences to leaders not assigned to Tables of Organization and Equipment (TOE) units in order to maintain a reservoir of highly competent combat leaders.

3. Leaders. The single most important asset in a quality force is having quality leaders at all grade levels and all soldiers E4 and above should be addressed as leaders.⁶ The Army must prepare adaptive, self-aware leaders who can assume responsibilities three to five echelons higher post-mobilization or when there is a national decision to implement an appropriate hedge.⁷ In all areas, the Army must cultivate and institutionalize leader and teams of leaders abilities so leaders can assimilate changes more rapidly than can leaders of national peer rivals (singly or in coalition).⁸

4. Organization. The Army needs ad hoc, hybrid organizations, that can be readily modified to add situational-dependent BFAs or joint or combined forces that might be needed to dominate local military requirements.

5. Materiel. Modern materiel needs to have planned objective-force capabilities with variable survivability, lethality, and mobility backed by modernized legacy forces.

6. Soldiers. The Army needs to encourage enhanced professional development so as to train and retain leaders. Programs such as service with industry, tours supporting state and local government, and extended sabbaticals should be considered. Lateral mid-service entry should be encouraged to attract highly competent individuals into the USAR.⁹

However capable the quality force, there will be shortages. If the six imperatives have been supported in the quality force, rapid expansion to build the agreed hedges should be feasible.

Specific hedge design depends on the nature of shortfalls between the quality force and the desired dominating quantity force. Hedges could be present across all BFAs or targeted to specific high-risk areas. Designing hedges to support the most challenging circumstance, which is world-war scale mobilization, might be prudent.

Transitioning from exceptional quality to significant quantity would cause great change to America's Army. The all-volunteer force would disappear. More nationally representative soldiers arriving with the draft Army would profoundly affect policy. For example, there would be a much higher percentage of Category IIIB

and Category IV soldiers; the economy would transition to a mobilization production base; and the Army would activate a standby mobilization training base.¹⁰

Under circumstances such as these, when a full mobilization hedge is implemented, policies and programs appropriate for each of the six imperatives during hedge execution might include the following:

Doctrine TTP—focusing on mid- to high-intensity conflict.

Training—conducting individual, team, and collective training in the unit; maintaining task, condition, standard, and quality-force learning structures; increasing hands-on training to accelerate leader development; distributing quality control of training that the institutional base provides, focused on leader preparation.

Leader—preparing for an actual post-mobilization position drawing on previous AC leader development (preparing combat (C), combat service (CS), and combat service support (CSS) leaders prepared to serve three to five echelons higher).

Organization—balancing C, CS, and CSS within brigade combat teams (BCT).¹¹

Materiel—executing a previously agreed on, multiyear rule (overmatch then peer competitor) and supporting new economy in whatever forms it takes (mass production).

Soldier—increasing accessions as structure increases to overmatch the peer competitor and assuming World War II draftee mental and physical characteristics.¹²

Developing and maintaining these DTLOMS hedges would be truly challenging and would

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portray the most difficult case; that is, expansion to a level of national mobilization comparable to World War II. Presumably there would have been accompanying national military policy decisions to follow 5- or 10-year rules for buildups (or much shorter periods for some forms of conflict such as cyberwar). Shortfalls in the quality force would have been determined, and a prudent national security community would have done essential planning for hedge execution.

If this world-war example seems extreme, select another—such as the early Cold-War strategy of preparing for two and one-half wars, which well exceeds current war planning. From that, estimate likely shortfalls, then think hedges.

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NOTES

1. Hedges are the policies/programs required to restore a known deficiency in ready-military capability.

2. Lieutenant General Frederic J. Brown, *The U.S. Army in Transition II: Landpower in the Information Age* (McLean, VA: Brassey's, 1993), 53-54.

3. Common usage is go or no go with respect to performing tasks to standard. Establishing and measuring high levels of performance, drawing on various forms of simulation linked to proven CTC learning practices (observer and controller (OC), opposing force (OPFOR), information systems (IS), after action review (AAR)).

4. See Donald Kagan and Frederick W. Kagan, *While America Sleeps* (New York: Saint Martin's Press, 2000).

5. International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS), ed., Table 38: International Comparisons of Defense Expenditure and Military Manpower, 1985, 1998, 1999, *The Military Balance 2000/2001* (London and New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 297.

6. The extraordinary strategic value of quality soldiers was evident in the success of Partnership for Peace (PfP). Even better, citizen-soldiers reinforced and,

in time, led the effort as various states teamed with PfP nations, such as the U.S. State of Georgia teaming with the Caucasian Republic of Georgia.

7. Being trained to assume command three to five echelons higher was a German practice in the Reichswehr in the 1920s.

8. Excellent learning innovation is being applied in this area in the interim brigade's nested leader preparation.

9. Highly flexible personnel-management policies, which would enable early vesting of retirement and lateral entry, are clearly needed.

10. Category IIIB and Category IV are rankings determined by the Armed Forces Qualifying Test. Category IIIB equals slightly below-average intelligence; Category IV equals below-average intelligence. For more information, see <http://dticaw.dtic.mil/phome/chapter_2.html>.

11. The terms "5-year or 10-year rule" designate the time period prior to likely employment when national leaders need to make a decision to expand from quality to quantity in land-power capability.

12. Balancing C, CS, and CSS BCTs should follow the general designs Douglas MacGregor advocates in *Breaking the Phalanx* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 1997).

Lieutenant General Frederic J. Brown, U.S. Army, Retired, Ph.D., is the longest serving chief of armor and cavalry since World War II. He served in Vietnam, the Continental United States, and Europe. He is the co-author of The Army in Transition and the author of The Army in Transition II: Landpower in the Information Age. His article "Transformation under Attack" appeared in the May-June 2002 issue of Military Review.